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CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Abid Hussain

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
Introduction		1	3
I.	TERMS OF REFERENCE	2	3
II.	ACTIVITIES	3 - 11	3
III.	ISSUES	12 - 44	5
A.	The right to seek and receive information	12 - 17	5
B.	National security laws	18 - 23	7
C.	Criminal libel	24 - 28	9
D.	New information technologies	29 - 36	10
E.	Women and freedom of expression	37 - 44	12

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CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
IV.	COUNTRY SITUATIONS	45 - 123	14
	Algeria	47 - 48	14
	Argentina	49 - 51	15
	Azerbaijan	52 - 55	15
	Chad	56 - 58	17
	China	59 - 68	17
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	69 - 71	19
	Egypt	72 - 74	19
	Georgia	75 - 77	20
	Hungary	78	20
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	79 - 81	20
	Japan	82 - 83	21
	Malaysia	84	22
	Mexico	85 - 87	22
	Nigeria	88 - 89	22
	Panama	90 - 97	23
	Republic of Korea	98 - 100	24
	Saudi Arabia	101 - 102	25
	Sierra Leone	103 - 104	25
	Sri Lanka	105 - 108	26
	Sudan	109 - 110	26
	Tunisia	111	27
	Turkey	112 - 116	27
	Uzbekistan	117 - 118	28
	Viet Nam	119 - 120	28
	Yugoslavia	121 - 123	28
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	124 - 128	29
	Annex: How to bring information before the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression		31

Introduction

1. The present report is the sixth report presented by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Abid Hussain (India), since the mandate was established by Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/45 of 5 March 1993. It is submitted pursuant to resolution 1998/42. Chapter I of the present report contains the terms of reference for the discharge of the mandate. In chapter II, the Special Rapporteur presents an account of the activities undertaken within the framework of his mandate in the past year. Chapter III provides a brief discussion on a number of issues which the Special Rapporteur considers to be important for the development of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Chapter IV contains brief summaries of urgent appeals and communications to and from Governments, along with observations of the Special Rapporteur. Lastly, chapter V contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur.

I. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2. The Special Rapporteur refers to his previous reports as regards the mandate and methods of work adopted by him. In accordance with the need to examine a number of specific questions concerning the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the structure of the present report is along the same lines as the previous report. Consequently, the main body of analysis of issues related to the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression will be discussed in section III, focusing on matters referred to by the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 1998/42 and which the Special Rapporteur considers as warranting special attention. These issues include the right to seek and receive information, concerns relating to national security laws and to criminal libel, the new information technologies, as well as the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression by women.

II. ACTIVITIES

3. The Special Rapporteur has received a large number of allegations concerning cases of violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in 1998. As was the case in previous years, the Special Rapporteur was only able to deal with a very limited number of requests for information to some Governments, owing to the insufficient financial and human resources to fulfil his mandate in the manner he would deem appropriate. The matters raised in previous reports to the Commission on Human Rights regarding the circumstances of work (E/CN.4/1995/32, paras. 92-95; E/CN.4/1996/39, para. 6; E/CN.4/1997/31, para. 7 and E/CN.4/1998/40, para. 3) unfortunately remain of great concern. The mandate requires a substantially increased pool of resources. Within the current constraints, the Special Rapporteur has engaged in an exchange of views with Governments only with regard to a limited number of cases, which are discussed in section IV.

4. It should thus be emphasized that the countries discussed in the respective sections in no way reflect the extent of the problem worldwide, as indeed violations of this right take place in almost every country in spite of the emergence of an increasing number of national institutions which are regionally working for the promotion and protection of human rights. To avoid

unnecessary duplication of effort, the Special Rapporteur has increased his cooperation with other special rapporteurs. In the past year, he has sent joint urgent appeals together with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nigeria, and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

5. Closer cooperation is envisaged with treaty bodies and human rights field operations, as well as other specialized bodies within the United Nations system, and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly at the local level, concerned with the right to freedom of expression. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur held two meetings (Paris, May 1998 and Montreal, September 1998) with Mr. Alain Modoux, Director of the Unit for Freedom of Expression and Democracy of UNESCO, to discuss closer cooperation between the two mechanisms. It was an occasion to examine the possibility for UNESCO to follow up the Special Rapporteur's recommendations by providing expertise to the States undergoing a democratization process to assist them in the field of media legislation or transformation of their Government-controlled radio and/or television into an editorially independent public broadcasting service. The Special Rapporteur would like to encourage this kind of cooperation, which can help to realize the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

6. From 26 to 29 May 1998, the Special Rapporteur attended the fifth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures and advisory services programme, held in Geneva. He also addressed the fourth session of the Sub-Commission's Working Group on Minorities about his mandate.

7. The Special Rapporteur visited Geneva from 30 March to 3 April 1998 for consultations and to present his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session. During this period, the Special Rapporteur met, among others, with representatives of the Government of Turkey to follow up on his earlier visit to that country and with the representative of Hungary to discuss his proposed visit to that country.

8. The Special Rapporteur considers the carrying out of country visits to be an essential element of the mandate. From 20 to 24 October 1998, the Special Rapporteur undertook a mission to Malaysia, followed by a visit to Hungary from 9 to 13 November 1998, on which he has submitted separate reports to the Commission at its current session (E/CN.4/1999/64/Add.1 and 2).

9. To date, the Special Rapporteur has a standing invitation to visit the Sudan from the Government of that country and hopes to visit in May or June 1998. While he has also been in touch with the Governments of Albania, Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Viet Nam to examine in situ the realization of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, he regrets that invitations have not so far been received from them. The Special Rapporteur wishes to reiterate his interest in visiting those countries.

10. From 24 to 27 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur participated in a seminar on Press and Democracy in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Special Rapporteur had the opportunity to attend another conference in Montreal, Canada, from 10 to 12 September 1998 on "Human Rights and the Internet" (see para. 31 below). Furthermore, he attended a meeting in New York with representatives from the Committee to Protect Journalists to discuss specific concerns regarding the mandate, particularly in view of the visit the Special Rapporteur was going to undertake to Malaysia. Lastly, the Special Rapporteur participated in the Commonwealth Editors Forum, held in Penang, Malaysia, on 21 October 1998.

11. The Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate that the role of non-governmental organizations in furthering the promotion and the protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression cannot be overestimated. Indeed, it is those organizations which spearhead these concerns and are forcefully advocating, monitoring and lobbying for human rights. Some of them have gone out of their way to help the Special Rapporteur in his mission. The Special Rapporteur wishes to express his special thanks to Article 19 - The International Centre Against Censorship, which continues to provide information and material relevant to the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression to the Special Rapporteur.

III. ISSUES

A. The right to seek and receive information

12. In resolution 1998/42 (para. 9 (d)), the Commission invited the Special Rapporteur to "develop further his commentary on the right to seek and receive information and to expand on his observations and recommendations arising from communications". In this regard, the Special Rapporteur expresses again his view, and emphasizes, that everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information and that this imposes a positive obligation on States to ensure access to information, particularly with regard to information held by Government in all types of storage and retrieval systems - including film, microfiche, electronic capacities, video and photographs - subject only to such restrictions as referred to in article 19, paragraph 3, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

13. Freedom of the press is a vital step in the free flow of information and in ensuring freedom of expression. It is the fundamental duty of the State to stand as a guarantor for freedom of the press. Every right carries with it a responsibility. Every freedom carries with it an obligation. The press is a powerful influence for good and evil. Ideally, it should be left to the press itself to determine what its responsibilities and corresponding obligations are. Where freedom of the press is wanting or curtailed, people cannot settle their differences through open debate and the authorities overreact, fearing the overall impact of dissent. Uprisings and fear follow. Freedom of the press may not guarantee peace, but it is a vital first step. Therefore, special care has to be taken to ensure that writers, poets, journalists and editors are not intimidated or prevented from expressing their views in their writings through censorship or other covert methods, or official sponsorship of press organs. Abuses against the press, journalists and writers have to be halted by launching investigations and publishing findings, in the press itself or by interested NGOs, with a view to raising public consciousness and

making the Government act according to international standards. The Special Rapporteur appreciates that studies have been done to expose abuses of power to thwart the free expression of views and opinions. The Special Rapporteur, through his missions, would like to continue to lend his support to such exercises. In this regard, his contribution should be assessed objectively. He also wishes to mention in this context the ruling of the Hungarian constitutional court to the effect that freedom of expression protects all opinions, regardless of their value.

14. A genuine writer serves a cause higher than himself, i.e. the cause of the welfare of the people. Although at times a writer may make outrageous statements, even wounding cultural sensitivities and commonly held beliefs, literature remains a basic medium through which imagination and the striving of the human mind are expressed most freely and in the most provocative forms. A writer is a seer in many ways, and a sage in many respects. Any society which stifles its writers closes its windows to fresh ideas and stunts its own growth. The freedom of expression of writers should therefore be strongly defended and their cause encouraged.

15. The Special Rapporteur continues to receive allegations of bias in broadcasting which severely limits or seriously compromises the right to seek, receive and impart information. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur wishes to recall points made in previous reports.

16. There are several fundamental principles which, if promoted and respected, enhance the right to seek, receive and impart information. These principles are: a monopoly or excessive concentration of ownership of media in the hands of a few is to be avoided in the interest of developing a plurality of viewpoints and voices; State-owned media have a responsibility to report on all aspects of national life and to provide access to a diversity of viewpoints; State-owned media must not be used as a communication or propaganda organ for one political party or as an advocate for the Government to the exclusion of all other parties and groups; laws governing the registration of media and the allocation of broadcasting frequencies must be clear and balanced; any regulatory mechanism, whether for electronic or print media, should be independent of all political parties and function at an arms-length relationship to Government; access to technology, newsprint, printing facilities and distribution points should only be regulated by the supply and demand of the free market.

17. With these broad principles in mind, the Special Rapporteur wishes to emphasize that in pre-election periods, and in the interest of enuring the most fully informed electorate possible, the State must ensure that media are given the widest possible latitude. This can be best achieved when, inter alia:

(a) Media inform the public about the political parties, candidates, campaign issues and voting processes; government media are balanced and impartial in election reporting, do not discriminate against any political party or candidate in granting access to air time and ensure that news, interviews and information programmes are not biased in favour of, or against, any party or candidate;

(b) Censorship of any election programme is not allowed and the media are encouraged to broadcast and/or publish election-related programmes and are not penalized for programmes critical of the Government, its policies or the ruling party;

(c) The media are exempt from legal liability for provocative statements by candidates or party representatives; the right of reply is provided, as well as correction or retraction, in cases where defamation is alleged; the manner and extent of remedy is determined by an independent body;

(d) There is a clear distinction between news and press conferences related to functions of office and activities by members of the Government, particularly if the member concerned is seeking election;

(e) Air time for direct access programmes is granted on a fair and non-discriminatory basis; the time allocated to parties or candidates is sufficient for them to communicate their messages and for the voters to inform themselves about the issues, party positions, qualifications and character of the candidates;

(f) Programmes provide an effective opportunity for journalists, current affairs experts and/or the general public to put questions to party leaders and other candidates, and for the candidates to debate with each other;

(g) Media, and especially government media, engage in voter education, including by providing information on how to use the voting process, when and where to vote, how to register to vote and verify proper registration, the secrecy of the ballot, the importance of voting, the functions of the offices under contention and other matters; and

(h) Print and broadcast media make available reports and programmes that will reach the largest number of voters possible, including in minority languages and for those who may have been traditionally excluded from the political process, such as ethnic or religious minorities, women and indigenous groups.

B. National security laws

18. The Special Rapporteur continues to be concerned about the manner in which anti-terrorism and national security laws can, on occasion, be misused by officials agencies to violate both the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information. The Special Rapporteur refers to his report on his mission to Malaysia (E/CN.4/1999/64/Add.1) in which the issue of Malaysia's national security laws is discussed.

19. Organized terrorism is a curse for all of civilized society. In their quest to gain headlines in the media terrorist groups resort to acts of spectacular violence. Mainly it is the innocent who are the victims. It is proverbially said that vengeance begets vengeance. Governments on their part may act with equal ferocity in dealing with terrorist activity. A vicious circle follows and needs to be broken. While effective action by Governments

may be necessary, Governments must at the same time ensure that the safety valve of free expression of genuine or supposed grievances is available to its citizen of all hues and opinions.

20. Human rights are sacrosanct but certainly cannot be manipulated to condone, encourage or foment terrorist activities. It is the primary obligation of Government to take pre-emptive action to forestall terrorist activities and restore order and tranquillity. In recent years the United Nations and the Commission on Human Rights have adopted successive resolutions on human rights and terrorism which unequivocally condemn terrorism and incitement of hatred and violence and call upon States to take all necessary effective measures to deal with terrorist groups. Terrorism is a vicious assault on human rights and laws enacted to counter terrorism have to be appreciated in the context of national and international situations.

21. In addition to the problems and issues outlined in his mission reports, the Special Rapporteur notes here that abuse of the powers granted under such laws often lead to: both prolonged and short-term arbitrary detention; torture; extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution; disappearances; threats and intimidation; the closure of media outlets; the banning of publications and programming; bans on public gatherings; bans and prohibitions on organizations, groups and associations that are in no way associated with terrorism and violence; strict censorship on all forms of communications; and tolerance of, if not actual support for, the abuses and crimes committed by police, security services, the armed forces and paramilitary groups.

22. As with broadcasting and the print media in pre-election periods, there are several points or principles which must be taken into account within the context of anti-terrorism and national security laws if the rights to opinion, expression and information are to be fully protected and promoted. These points include:

(a) No restriction may be justified on the ground of national security when it is actually intended to protect a Government from embarrassment or exposure of wrongdoing, to conceal information about the functioning of public institutions, entrench a particular ideology or suppress industrial unrest;

(b) Expression which transmits information by or about an organization that has been declared a threat to national security or a related interest may not be punished; expression in a particular language, and especially in a language of a national minority, may not be prohibited;

(c) No restriction on access to information may be imposed unless it has been demonstrated that the restriction is necessary to protect a legitimate national security interest;

(d) The public interest in knowing the information shall be a primary consideration in all laws and decisions concerning the right to obtain information;

(e) The public's right to know must override any justification for trying to stop further publication of information that has been made generally available, by whatever means, whether lawful or not; and

(f) Any restriction on the free flow of information may not be of such a nature as to thwart the purposes of human rights and humanitarian law.

23. In setting out these points, the Special Rapporteur reiterates his recommendation to the Commission on Human Rights to endorse the Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. The Special Rapporteur remains convinced that the Principles give useful guidance for protecting adequately the right to freedom of opinion, expression and information.

C. Criminal libel

24. Article 19 (a) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights allows a limited restriction on the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the interest of "respect of the rights or reputations of others". The Special Rapporteur's attention has been drawn to cases and a number of instances in which libel and defamation suits, or even the threat of such suits, has had, or has potentially had, a direct and negative impact on freedom of expression, access to information and the free exchange of ideas. The effect is often described as "libel chill", a climate of fear in which writers, editors and publishers become increasingly reluctant to report and publish on matters of great public interest not only because of the large awards granted in these cases but also because of the often ruinous costs of defending such actions.

25. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur wishes to refer to his report on the mission to Malaysia (E/CN.4/1999/64/Add.1) in which he raises the issue of defamation laws used to stifle freedom of expression.

26. International case law in the area of libel and defamation has consistently found in favour of disclosure and public criticism of public figures, when warranted. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur notes that, in *Verbitsky v. Argentina*, in which a writer was convicted under the *desacato* ("contempt") law for defaming the Argentine Supreme Court Minister, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights stated, "in democratic societies political and public figures must be more, not less, open to public scrutiny and criticism". 1/ In this case, the conviction was reversed and the Government repealed the *desacato* law. The European Court of Human Rights has also considered a number of cases, one of the most famous possibly being *Lingens v. Austria*. In that case a journalist accused the Chancellor of, inter alia, the "basest opportunism" and "immoral" and "undignified" behaviour. 2/ At the time the case came before the courts, Austrian law required that the truth of the allegations be proved. The journalist was convicted partly for failure to do this. On appeal, the European Court held, inter alia, that: the law was unreasonable; it was impossible to prove the truth of opinions; the characterization of the politician had been reasonable; and the journalist's article had been part of a larger political debate and not merely a gratuitous attack on the individual concerned.

27. A review of cases contained in various thematic and country reports before the Commission on Human Rights shows that, in some countries, disclosure of criminal or corrupt behaviour on the part of the authorities and/or officials continue to lead to death threats, harassment, intimidation,

assault and murder - often usually by the armed forces, police, security service or individuals acting with the knowledge of such bodies. This is for instance the case in Croatia where the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Zagreb reported that as of May 1998, some 400 civil and 130 criminal cases for defamation were pending against journalists and publishers.

28. Following on from this, the Special Rapporteur believes strongly that it is critical to raise the public conscience to ensure that criminal laws are not used (or abused) to stifle public awareness and suppress discussion of matters of general or specific interest. At minimum, it must be understood that:

(a) The only legitimate purpose of defamation, libel, slander and insult laws is to protect reputations; this implies defamation will apply only to individuals - not flags, States, groups, etc.; these laws should never be used to prevent criticism of government or even for such reasons as maintaining public order for which specific incitement laws exist;

(b) Defamation laws should reflect the principle that public figures are required to tolerate a greater degree of criticism than private citizens; defamation law should not afford special protection to the president and other senior political figures; remedy and compensation under civil law should be provided;

(c) The standards applied to defamation law should not be so stringent as to have a chilling effect on freedom of expression;

(d) To require truth in the context of publications relating to matters of public interest is excessive; it should be sufficient if reasonable efforts have been made to ascertain the truth;

(e) With regard to opinions, it should be clear that only patently unreasonable views may qualify as defamatory;

(f) The onus of proof of all elements should be on those claiming to have been defamed rather than on the defendant; where truth is an issue, the burden of proof should lie with the plaintiff;

(g) In defamation and libel actions, a range of remedies should be available, including apology and/or correction; and

(h) Sanctions for defamation should not be so large as to exert a chilling effect on freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information; penal sanctions, in particular imprisonment, should never be applied.

D. New information technologies

29. In resolution 1998/42 the Commission on Human Rights invited the Special Rapporteur to "assess the advantages and challenges of new telecommunications technologies, including the Internet, on the exercise of the right to freedom

of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information", bearing in mind the work undertaken by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

30. At the outset, the Special Rapporteur wishes to reiterate his opinion that the new technologies and, in particular, the Internet are inherently democratic, provide the public and individuals with access to information sources and will, over time, enable all to participate actively in the communication process. He also wishes to reiterate his view that actions by States to impose excessive regulations on the use of these technologies and, again, particularly the Internet - on the grounds that control, regulation and denial of access are necessary to preserve the moral fabric and cultural identity of societies - ignore the capacity and resilience of individuals and societies - whether on a national, State, municipal, community or even neighbourhood level - often to take self-correcting measures to re-establish equilibrium without excessive interference or regulation by the State.

31. The Special Rapporteur had the opportunity to attend a conference in Montreal, Canada, from 10 to 12 September 1998. The conference was hosted by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation (Fondation canadienne des droits de la personne) and the subject was "Human Rights and the Internet". Participants came from both developed and developing countries. On the basis of the presentations at that conference and discussions with participants, the Special Rapporteur makes the following few observations.

32. It is clear that the Internet is an increasingly important human rights education tool which contributes to a broader awareness of international human rights standards, provisions and principles. It is also one of the most effective tools to combat intolerance by opening the gateway to messages of mutual respect, enabling them to circulate freely worldwide, and by encouraging collective actions to oppose and bring to an end such phenomena as hate speech, racism and the sexual and commercial exploitation of, in particular, women and children. The instinct or tendency of Governments to consider regulation rather than enhancing and increasing access to the Internet is, therefore, to be strongly checked. While perhaps unique in its reach and application, the Internet is, at base, merely another form of communication to which any restriction and regulation would violate the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, in particular, article 19.

33. Another point to be made is that the ideal of universal access to the Internet should not just remain an ideal. In a large number of countries there still is a huge need to improve, or even install, the technology needed to create access to the Internet; this same need is common in a number of developed countries with regard to remote or marginalized communities and peoples. The inherently democratic character of the Internet will be eroded to the extent that universal access is not achieved. Following on from this, there is a clear and urgent need to ensure that no one language or culture dominates and dictates the use of the technical capacities at the expense of all others. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur notes that participants at the conference were clear: to have an Internet *for* all, it is necessary to have information *from* all.

34. The Special Rapporteur recalls that in his report to the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights, he referred to actions by several Governments to prohibit or severely restrict access to new information technologies, including the Internet. Significantly, the instances cited related to developing countries and it is in those and other developing countries where people are most in need of access to these technologies in order to tell their own stories to a worldwide audience. If progress is to be made to defeat racism, hate speech and intolerance on a national and international scale, it is incumbent upon all Governments to see the Internet and other information technologies not as things requiring regulation and restriction but rather as the means to achieve a genuine plurality of voices. The Special Rapporteur strongly believes that the world needs more, not less, speech - in as many languages and reflecting as many cultures as are known to exist.

35. It is the Special Rapporteur's strongly held view that the main challenge presented by new information technologies is not how to impose restrictions creatively in order not to exceed the grounds for restriction set out in international human rights instruments. The challenge is to integrate fully new information technologies into a development process. This process must benefit all equally, must not privilege those who are already among the elite and must open the gateway to information from a diversity of sources. The process must create a capacity to identify that which is common, appreciate that which is different, and combat a use of these technologies which crosses the internationally established threshold, becomes crime and ceases to be speech.

36. The Internet should not be a "law-free zone". The Special Rapporteur is planning to work with other international and national organizations to prevent it from becoming a "safe haven" for conduct threatening human rights. Various forms of Internet watch-activities can be developed to protect consumers and children. But we should not be excessively preoccupied with the dark side of the new technologies for these are giving power and influence to the disenfranchised, empowering the powerless.

E. Women and freedom of expression

37. At its fifty-fourth session the Commission on Human Rights invited the Special Rapporteur, in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, to continue to pay particular attention "to the situation of women and the relationship between the effective promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and incidents of discrimination based on sex, creating obstacles for women with regard to their right to seek, receive and impart information". The Special Rapporteur regrets that constraints of time and resources limited the extent to which the work could be jointly undertaken with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. This remains an area of critical importance to him and he sincerely hopes that in the near future more deliberate efforts can be made in this area.

38. That being said, the Special Rapporteur notes the important discussions held during the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women (see E/CN.6/1998/12). From these discussions it is clear that central to the issues of equal access for women to rights, equal opportunities for the

enjoyment of rights, and equal treatment in that enjoyment is the actual extent to which women may exercise their rights to opinion, expression and information without discrimination and the degree to which women actually enjoy the right to participation in public life. The Special Rapporteur states again that the problem does not lie in the manner in which international human rights standards have been elaborated but rather in the restrictive and traditional interpretations and applications of human rights law. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that it is not acceptable for women still to be dependent on men to represent their views and protect their interests nor is it acceptable that women continue to be consistently excluded from decision-making processes that not only affect them but society in general.

39. The Special Rapporteur remains convinced that any real consideration of how to ensure the realization of all human rights for all women necessarily includes consideration of the rights to opinion, expression, participation, information, association and assembly. There can be no doubt that in the absence of these rights, *de jure* or de facto or both, women will remain under-represented and societies will continue to ignore not only their rights and needs but the creative contribution they can make towards a general improvement of societies. It is therefore imperative that real, qualitative and quantitative measures be taken to ensure women's participation, as equal partners, in private and public life. On that basis, the following two points must be kept in mind.

40. First, violence and fear of violence in public and private life remains one of the main concerns of women worldwide and, in order to break the silence and taboos surrounding violence, public awareness campaigns on the impact of violence are essential. These campaigns must be devised with women as full participants and must proceed on the understanding that most women do not seem to seek help from crisis services or the police, because of ignorance, fear or shame. Many women are still not aware of existing laws or their rights and frequently they have no access to the judicial system, especially if they are poor, illiterate or migrants.

41. Second, it is generally acknowledged that violence against women is one of the most constant and enduring characteristics of armed conflict. Efforts to ensure that violence against women is fully incorporated into the Statute of the new International Criminal Court are welcome. Feelings of shame associated with everyday abuses in the context of family and workplace need to be articulated. Unfortunately, there is a history of official inattention to women's experience of disaster and violence. For instance, the suffering of women Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) in Japan has been portrayed only through themes of suffering motherhood with the stereotypical mythical mother with inhuman strength and endurance. The gender-specific nature of atrocities committed against women is also evident in testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa where women had to be urged to speak not only about the horrendous experiences of their husbands, sons and brothers, but also the harm done to themselves.

42. The Special Rapporteur is convinced of the need not only to pay more attention to women as victims of this violence but also to their potential as agents of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peace-building. The

importance of fully involving women in designing rehabilitation policies in post-conflict situations cannot be overstated, nor can the need to increase, through measures of affirmative action if necessary, women's participation and leadership in decision-making and conflict prevention at both the national and international levels.

43. With those points in mind, the Special Rapporteur draws attention again to General Recommendation No. 23, adopted in 1997 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The Committee noted that "despite women's central role in sustaining the family and society and their contribution to development, they have been excluded from political life and the decision-making process, which nonetheless determine the pattern of their daily lives and the future of societies. Particularly in times of crisis, this exclusion has silenced women's voices and rendered invisible their contribution and experiences." The Special Rapporteur also underlines again the link between political participation and participation in the decision-making process and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

44. The Special Rapporteur attaches considerable importance and priority to the question of the link between freedom of opinion and expression and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women. He urges States, United Nations organ and bodies, human rights NGOs and organizations working with and/or on behalf of women to provide him with information on, for example, individual cases, general situations and/or legal impediments to women's full enjoyment of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur wishes to refer to the annex to the present report which provides guidelines on how to bring information to the Special Rapporteur in the framework of his mandate.

IV. COUNTRY SITUATIONS

45. The Special Rapporteur in this section reports on the communications sent out and replies received during 1998. This, however, in no way implies that all cases of earlier communications have been closed to the satisfaction of the Special Rapporteur, as in a number of cases, he has not received replies from the Governments concerned. He refers to his earlier reports for cases previously examined.

46. The Special Rapporteur would like to encourage Governments to continue their cooperation with the mandate by providing information on the cases in question. He wishes to reiterate that good cooperation is essential in that it opens the possibility for the Special Rapporteur to engage in a dialogue aimed at addressing the concerns as regards respect for freedom of opinion and expression. The opportunity for dialogue is even greater during country missions, and the Special Rapporteur wishes to express his hope for the continued cooperation of Governments in this regard.

Algeria

47. By letter dated 26 January 1998, the Government of Algeria conveyed information to the Special Rapporteur regarding the case of Omar Belhouchet

which was mentioned in the report of last year (E/CN.4/1998/40). With regard to the legal process, the Government noted that Omar Belhouchet, Director of the French-language daily El-Watan, was charged with flagrant insult to administrative authorities and defamation. On 10 April 1996 he was first sentenced to one year's imprisonment and to a fine of DA 500, which was then cancelled by a decision of a court in Algiers on 5 November 1997. The Government emphasized that Mr. Belhouchet had always appeared freely before the court and, having appealed and the recourse having suspensive effect, he could travel, even to foreign countries.

48. The Special Rapporteur thanks the Government of Algeria for its reply and would appreciate being kept informed about the result of the appeal of Omar Belhouchet. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur refers again to his previous reports with regard to the killing of journalists and would like to receive information on the progress made in the investigation of these cases and the prosecution of those responsible.

Argentina

49. On 27 May 1998, the Special Rapporteur transmitted an allegation to the Government of concerning the constant intimidation by certain sectors of the police against journalists and members of the Unión de Trabajadores de Prensa de Buenos Aires (UTPBA). One member of UTPBA, Ms. A.M. Careaga, was reported to have been followed and photographed allegedly for her testimony in a case that concerned the disappearance of Spanish citizens during Argentina's military Government. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, the Government also sought to restrict the freedom of the press by attempting to introduce legislation which would impose disproportionately heavy penalties for slander and defamation. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur received information concerning the assassination of J.L. Cabezas and M. Bonnino, two journalists and members of UTPBA, in January 1997 and November 1993, respectively. It is alleged that the Government has not carried out a thorough investigation into the assassination of Mr. Bonnino and that no results of any investigation have been made known. The investigation of Mr. Bonnino's death reportedly remains pending before the local court of first instance, and the case of Mr. Cabezas' murder is supposedly pending before a district court in Buenos Aires.

50. In the same letter the Special Rapporteur requested an invitation to carry out a country visit to Argentina in the course of 1998, as such a visit would enable him to better understand the situation relating to the freedom of opinion and expression in the country and to make a more dispassionate and realistic assessment of the situation.

51. The Special Rapporteur regrets that at the time of the finalization of the present report no reply had been received from the Government on the concerns raised and hopes that the Government will respond soon.

Azerbaijan

52. On 25 September 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an urgent appeal to the Government of Azerbaijan jointly with the Special Rapporteur on torture on the alleged beating and harassment of more than 30 journalists in Baku

on 12 September 1998. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, the following journalists, including some members of the Labour Union of Azerbaijani Journalists, were beaten and some had their equipment confiscated by the police as they were covering a banned opposition rally: Azer Sariyev, correspondent for Express newspaper; Faiq Qazanfaroglu, correspondent for Millet newspaper; Mahammad Ersoy, deputy editor of Yurd yeri newspaper; Ibrahim Niyazly, correspondent for Democratic Azerbaijan newspaper; Anar Mammadli, correspondent for Azerbaijan Gencleri newspaper; Movsun Mammadov, correspondent for Monitor magazine; Xaliq Mammadov, Haji Zamin and Khalig Bakhadyr, of Azadlig newspaper; Elmir Suleymanov, cameraman for ANS TV; Ilqar Shahmaroglu, Nebi Rustamov and Taghi Yusifov, correspondents for Qanun magazine; Tahir Pasha and Natiq Javadli, correspondents for Olaylar newspaper; Tapdiq Farhadoglu, correspondent for the Turan agency; Sarvan Rizvanov, editor of Azadlig newspaper; Movlud Javadov, Sebuhi Mammadli and Zamina Aliqizi, correspondents for Yeni Musavat newspaper; Kamil Taghisoy, head of department of Yeni Musavat; Shahin Jafarli and Azer Qarachanli, editors of Yeni Musavat; Allahverdi Donmez, correspondent for Tezadlar newspaper; Mehseti Sherif, correspondent for Rezonans newspaper; Talekh Zafarli and Rasul Mursaqulov, correspondents for Chag newspaper; Tunzale Rafiqqizi, correspondent for Ana Veten newspaper; Rey Kerimoglu, correspondent for Sharq newspaper; Azer Rashidoglu, correspondent for Ayna newspaper; Ajdar, cameraman for Azadlig newspaper; Lachin Semra, correspondent for Muxalifet newspaper; Eldaniz Badalov, cameraman for Bu gun newspaper; Tahir Mammadov, deputy editor-in-chief of Chag; Elman Maliyev, correspondent for Hurriyyet newspaper; and Shahbaz Xuduoglu, editor of Qanun.

53. It is also reported that police attempted to break into the office building of several opposition and independent news outlets, among them the Azadlig and Chag newspapers and the Turan agency. It is alleged that two of the above-mentioned journalists, Tahir Mammadov and Shahbaz Xuduoglu, were arrested by the police, along with Elman Maliyev, who was taken to the police station. The Special Rapporteur specifically requested the Government of Azerbaijan to provide pertinent information on the court, agency or other competent body which was, or is, responsible for investigation of the allegations and the prosecution of those responsible.

54. By letter dated 3 December 1998, the Government of Azerbaijan indicated that on 12 September 1998 a group of about 300 persons used force against police officers on duty in an area close to a stadium where an authorized opposition rally was supposed to take place. These unlawful actions are said by the Government to have seriously disrupted public order and were therefore the object of criminal proceedings by the Office of the Procurator-General of Baku. Thirty nine persons were subsequently charged. Only one of them complained of physical and psychological pressures. The Government further confirmed that the Procurator-General received in mid-September letters of complaint from the Turan news agency and the Labour Union of Azerbaijani Journalists, but that no individual submitted any official complaint, although they had been invited to do so. The Government stated that most of the persons mentioned in the Special Rapporteurs' letter either did not complain, or indicated to the Office of the Procurator-General that the losses they had suffered during the clash with the police were negligible. However, the investigators are said to plan to verify whether the rights of other journalists mentioned have been violated. Finally, the Government indicated

that the Procurator-General has communicated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs his views on the need for urgent action to prevent the violation of the journalists' rights.

55. The Special Rapporteur thanks the Government of Azerbaijan for the detailed reply provided and the willingness shown to cooperate with the mandate.

Chad

56. On 18 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an allegation to the Government of Chad relating to the case of Ngarléjy Yorongar, a member of Parliament whose parliamentary immunity was lifted on 26 May 1998 before he was reportedly arrested on 2 June 1998 and placed in custody awaiting trial. According to the information received, Ngarléjy Yorongar had criticized the construction plan for a pipeline and allegedly implicated the head of State and the President of the Parliament in this project.

57. The Government of Chad provided the Special Rapporteur with a reply on 29 July 1998 in which it confirmed that the parliamentary immunity of Ngarléjy Yorongar was lifted before any criminal action was taken. According to the Government, Mr. Yorongar had received a fair trial. The Government also contested information according to which Mr. Yorongar was arrested several times and harrassed by the police. Finally, the Government considered that the case to be simply one of defamation, despite the lack of cooperation from the accused and the behaviour of his defence lawyers.

58. The Special Rapporteur thanks the Government of Chad for the reply provided and the willingness shown to cooperate with the mandate. The Special Rapporteur would appreciate being informed on further developments in this case.

China

59. By letter dated 24 February 1998, the Government of China replied to the Special Rapporteur's letter of 12 November 1997 (see E/CN.4/1998/40, para. 76) in which he communicated to the Government his concerns for the following individuals whose right to freedom of opinion and expression had been subjected to arbitrary interference: Wang Dan, Wang Ming, Gao Yu, Liu Nianchun, Li Hai, Yao Zhenxiang, Yao Zhenxian, Fu Guoyong, Chen Longde, and Wang Donghai.

60. The Government informed the Special Rapporteur that Wang Dan was found guilty in 1991 of advocating the overthrow of the Government, sentenced to four years in prison and stripped of his political rights for one year. On 17 February 1993, he was paroled but rearrested on 3 October 1996 for having colluded with foreign organizations and posing a threat to national security while he was stripped of his political rights. Wang Dan was sentenced to 11 years in prison for having conspired to overthrow the Chinese State and the socialist system. The Government informed the Special Rapporteur that Wang Dan was in good health, held at the Jinshou prison in Liaoning Province, and permitted to meet with his family frequently.

61. In regard to Wang Ming, the Government stated that he, along with others, had provoked disturbances and disrupted public order in Guizhou, Sichuan, and elsewhere. Hence, on 6 December 1996, Wang Ming was assigned to three years' re-education through labour. The Government informed the Special Rapporteur that Gao Yu was sentenced on 10 November 1994 to six years in prison for allegedly having disclosed State secrets. She is being held at the Yanqing Prison in Beijing and is reported to be in good health after her high blood pressure was treated with medication.

62. Concerning Liu Nianchun, the Government informed the Special Rapporteur that he was sentenced in 1991 to three years in prison for counter-revolutionary activities. Since 1993, it is alleged that Liu Nianchun and others had planned to set up an illegal organization, provoked and disrupted public order by engaging in unlawful activities in Beijing, Shanghai and elsewhere. On 14 May 1996, Liu Nianchun was assigned to three years of re-education. The Government wished to inform the Special Rapporteur that the allegation that Liu Nianchun had received no medical attention was erroneous, as he was sent to two different hospitals four times for examination in August 1996 and, at the family's request, to a third hospital on 26 February 1997, which confirmed no visible medical problems.

63. Li Hai, as reported by the Government, was sentenced on 18 May 1997 to nine years in prison for having gathered State secrets. He was also stripped of his political rights for two years and is now serving his sentence in a Beijing prison. In July 1996, the brothers Yao Zhenxiang and Yao Zhenxian, were assigned to three and two years of re-education through labour, respectively, for having duplicated and broadcast obscene materials. The two brothers are in good health since they receive appropriate medical care.

64. In regard to Fu Guoyong, the Government informed the Special Rapporteur that he was assigned to re-education through labour in 1990 for provoking a disturbance, but he remained unreformed and allegedly continued to provoke disturbances and disrupt public order. On 5 November 1996, he was assigned to three years in re-education.

65. Wang Donghai, who was first sentenced in July 1989 to two years in prison for counter-revolutionary propaganda and provocation, was assigned to a year at a re-education facility on 29 May 1996 for continuing to engage in activities that endangered State security after his first release. Wang Donghai completed his assignment on 28 May 1997, and the public security authorities have never placed him under house arrest.

66. Chen Longde was sentenced in September 1989 to three years in prison for counter-revolutionary propaganda and provocation. The Government stated that in May 1996, he, in conjunction with others, plotted and provoked a disturbance and disrupted public order, for which he was assigned to three years of re-education on 26 July 1996. The Government asserted that torture and beatings do not take place at the facility.

67. Furthermore, the Government noted that Chinese citizens have the right under its Constitution and other laws to freedom of opinion, the press, assembly, association, the freedom to march and to hold demonstrations. However, its Constitution also states that citizens must accept the duties

imposed by the Constitution and laws and must not harm the interests of the State, society, and the collective or the legitimate rights of other citizens. Furthermore, no one can be punished simply for holding dissident political views or exercising the right to freedom of opinion. The individuals named above were punished under the law because they committed crimes.

68. The Special Rapporteur thanks the Government of China for the detailed reply provided and the willingness that it has indicated to cooperate with the mandate. Above all, the Special Rapporteur welcomes the release of Wang Dan from prison on 20 April 1998 for medical reasons, and his transfer to the United States. He would, however, appreciate if the Government could provide him with further information on the case.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

69. On 28 October 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an urgent appeal to the Government in a joint initiative with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Concern was expressed with regard to the fate of three journalists: Paulin Tusumba Nkazi-a-Kanda, editor of the newspaper Le Peuple, Jean-Marie Kanku and Professeur Muamba Kayembe or "Ali Kamba", both from the newspaper L'alerte.

70. According to the information received, the first of the above-mentioned journalists was arrested on 16 October 1998 and is currently detained in the court prison for having published an article on the August 1998 rebellion against the ruling Government. The two other journalists were reportedly arrested on 19 October 1998 for having published an article which was said to defame the Minister for Home Affairs.

71. The Special Rapporteur regrets that no reply has yet been received from the Government on the cases in question and hopes for an early response.

Egypt

72. On 9 September 1998, the Special Rapporteur transmitted an allegation to the Government of Egypt concerning the confiscation of the first two issues and prohibition of further distribution of *Alf Lela*, a cultural journal based in Cyprus, by the Egyptian authorities in August 1998. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, as a foreign publication in Egypt, *Alf Lela* is subject to the authority of the Censorship Department of the Ministry of Information. It is reported that the reason given by the authorities for the confiscation of *Alf Lela's* 12 August 1998 issue was that it had "contained articles of a political nature". No reason was supposedly given for the banning of the second issue on 19 August 1998.

73. By letter of 4 December 1998, the Special Rapporteur transmitted an urgent appeal to the Government of Egypt, jointly with the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the independence on judges and lawyers, to express their concern over the detention of Mr. Hafez Abu Se'da, a lawyer and the Secretary-General of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR). According to the information received, the Egyptian Higher State Security Prosecution ordered the detention of Mr. Hafez Abu Se'da on 1 December 1998

for a period of 15 days after he appeared as a witness in a court hearing about EOHR's financing. It has been reported that Mr. Hafez Abu Se'da faces charges of: (i) "accepting funds from a foreign country with the aim of fulfilling acts that would harm Egypt"; (ii) "disseminating false information abroad that would harm national interests"; and (iii) "receiving donations without obtaining permission from the competent authorities". It is claimed that the current whereabouts of Mr. Hafez Abu Se'da are unknown, and neither his lawyers nor his family have apparently been informed of his whereabouts or been allowed to visit him.

74. The Special Rapporteur wishes to point out that the reply to be provided by the Government in this case will be published in next year's report.

Georgia

75. On 2 October 1998 the Special Rapporteur sent a joint allegation to the Government of Georgia with the Special Rapporteur on torture. Concern was expressed in regard to two Georgian journalists, Constantine (Kote) Vardzelashvili and Giorgi (Gogi) Kavtaradze, from the non-governmental Liberty Institute in Tbilisi, who were beaten and threatened by the police on 21 September 1998 after having tried to obtain information from the head of the Special Police Unit, Temur Mgebrishvili, about the alleged use of force by the police against a crowd of people.

76. On 26 November 1998 the Government of Georgia sent a preliminary reply in which it informed the Special Rapporteur that the two journalists were taken by police to the police station after they offered resistance to the police forces who were carrying out law enforcement measures on Agmashenebeli Avenue. Mr. Vardzelashvili and Mr. Kavtaradze were released the same evening. After a complaint by the two journalists that the police had physically abused them, an investigation is being monitored by the Prosecutor General of Georgia. The Government of Georgia added that it would send more complete information on the results of the investigation.

77. The Special Rapporteur wishes to thank the Government of Georgia for its prompt reply and welcomes the fact that an investigation has been ordered. The Special Rapporteur is looking forward to receiving additional information on the results of this investigation.

Hungary

78. From 9 to 13 November 1998, the Special Rapporteur undertook a visit to Hungary, on which he has reported separately to the Commission at its present session (E/CN.4/1999/64/Add.2).

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

79. By letter of 30 October 1998, the Special Rapporteur transmitted information to the Government of Iran with regard to the closing down of the newspapers *Rah-e-No* and *Tarana* on 17 September 1998. The two newspapers were said to have published criticism of Iran's hard-line leadership and its position on Afghanistan. In addition, a Press Court in Tehran reportedly revoked on 29 September 1998 the printing licence for the monthly magazine

Jameh-Salem for having allegedly defamed the late spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeiny. *Jameh-Salem's* director, Siavoch Gouran, was reportedly given a one-year suspended jail sentence and ordered to pay a fine equivalent to US$ 1,000. It is further reported that on 6 October 1998 a Press Court also suspended the publication of the weekly magazines *Asre-Ma* for six months and *Sobh* for four months. *Asre-Ma*'s director, Mohammad Salamati, was allegedly sentenced to a fine equivalent to US$ 1,000 for having published "insulting and deceitful" articles. *Sobh's* director, Mehdi Nassirj, was also said to have been fined the same amount.

80. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur raised his concerns for the following three journalists from the daily *Tous*, who were allegedly arrested after the closing down of the newspaper on 16 September 1998: editor Mashallah Shamsolva'ezin, publishing director Hamid Reza Jalaipour, and sub-editor Mohammad Javadi Hessar. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, the three journalists are awaiting trial by the Revolutionary Court, along with their colleague, *Tous* columnist Ibrahim Nabavi, who was arrested on 18 September 1998. Although it is reported that Hama Reza Jalaipour was released on 13 October 1998 and the others around 2 October 1998, the four journalists are still charged with having carried out subversive activities against State security. It has also been reported that some of the four journalists may be charged with the offence *moharebe ba khoda*, or enmity with God, which supposedly carries the death penalty.

81. The Special Rapporteur anxiously awaits a reply from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the cases in question and hopes for an early response.

Japan

82. In a joint initiative with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Special Rapporteur sent on 13 July 1998 an allegation to the Government of Japan concerning over 10,000 web pages, bulletin boards and news-servers in Japan which allegedly distribute images of child pornography over the Internet. According to the information received, images of children, sometimes as young as eight or nine years old, depicting their rape, torture, and even murder, can be downloaded easily by anyone with basic knowledge of the Internet. The source reports that although this is a global phenomenon, the proliferation of such Websites from Japanese news-servers is said to be particularly marked.

83. The Special Rapporteur regrets that at the time of the finalization of the present report, no reply had been received from the Government of Japan on the concerns raised. The Special Rapporteur would like to refer to article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which stipulates States parties shall protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and urges the Government of Japan to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all children who have access to the Internet, or whose images are portrayed thereon. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur urges the Government to carry out an impartial and thorough investigation into the facts as described above and to identify those responsible.

Malaysia

84. From 20 to 24 October 1998, the Special Rapporteur undertook a visit to Malaysia, on which he has reported separately to the Commission at its present session (E/CN.4/1999/64/Add.1).

Mexico

85. On 13 February 1998, the Government of Mexico, responding to the Special Rapporteur's letter of 30 October 1997 (see E/CN.4/1998/40, para. 83), provided detailed information about the investigations carried out on the cases of René Solorio, Ernesto Madrid and Gerardo Segura, journalists at TV Azteca, who were abducted and tortured for several hours, presumably because of the revelations made of alleged abuses and misdeeds committed by law enforcement agents. More details have been also communicated by the Government about the cases of Daniel Lizárraga and David Vicenteno, journalists at La Reforma, who were kidnapped and assaulted. Further explanations were given for the killing of Abdel Jesus Bueno León, publisher and editor of 7 Días; questions raised about the deaths of Benjamin Flores González, working at La Prensa, and Victor Hernández Martínez, journalist for the weekly Como, were answered as well. According to the Mexican authorities, all of these cases are still under investigation or already in the prosecution stage.

86. As regards the abduction, assault and torture allegedly suffered by Mr. Solorio, Mr. Madrid and Mr. Segura, the Government of Mexico states that the ongoing investigation by the Attorney-General's Office has found some contradictions in several of the victims' accounts; they are not cooperating with the authorities in the investigation. The cases of Mr. Lizárraga and Mr. Vicenteno, allegedly object of abduction, assault and threats, are under investigation at the National Commission on Human Rights in an information-gathering stage. Mr. Hernández Martínez's death is also being investigated by the National Commission on Human Rights where the file is soon to be completed. As regards the murder of Mr. Bueno León, the Commission has started an investigation as it could be linked to the death of another journalist, Leoncio Pontor García. With respect to the case of Mr. Flores González's death, the judicial authorities have ordered the detention of five persons on charges of homicide and criminal association. They are in prison awaiting trial.

87. The Special Rapporteur thanks and takes note of the information provided by the Government of Mexico. He would like to be provided with additional information about the ongoing investigations and prosecution processes.

Nigeria

88. On 8 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an urgent action to the Government of Nigeria jointly with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Nigeria, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, relating to the case of Mr. Niran Malaolu. According to the information received, Mr. Malaolu, the editor of an independent daily newspaper (The Diet), was arrested on 28 December 1997 and sentenced to life imprisonment by a Special

Military Tribunal on 28 April 1998 for concealment of treason. Prior to his arraignment, Mr. Malaolu was denied access to a lawyer, a doctor and members of his family. Mr. Malaolu was allegedly punished for news stories published by his paper concerning an alleged coup plot involving Lieutenant General Oladipo Diya, as well as other military officers and civilians who also were convicted by the Tribunal and sentenced.

89. The Special Rapporteur regrets that no reply has been provided by the Government on this case and hopes to receive one soon.

Panama

90. By letter dated 30 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur transmitted information to the Government in regard to legal limitations on the right to freedom of expression and opinion, in particular article 33 of the Constitution, which enables State authorities to fine or arrest any person who offends or shows disrespect to them in the performance of their duties; articles 172, 173 and 173A of the Criminal Code, which impose penalties of fines or imprisonment for "slander and offence"; and Law 67 of 1978, which prohibits the exercise of the profession of journalism by individuals who do not possess an alleged "professional competence". The authorities are said to have used the above-mentioned legislation to prosecute and punish those who criticize the Government, such as in the case of journalist Gustavo Gorriti and Dr. Miguel Antonio Bernal, who was reportedly prosecuted for having implicated the national police in incidents which had occurred in Coiba Island penitentiary.

91. On 5 October 1998 the Government informed the Special Rapporteur that Panama's Criminal Code governs issues relating to calumny and insult in order to preserve the dignity and good name of the individual. Victims of false statements have recourse to the appropriate legal authority and can request an investigation and compensation for damages. The Government has set up a special commission to undertake an examination of the provision contained in article 173A of the Criminal Code and hopes to be able to promote national consensus on this issue.

92. The Government also informed the Special Rapporteur that Act No. 67 of 1978 is applicable to the communication media and contains provisions on the purely formal requirements which must be fulfilled before publication in regard to their owners and directors, and on other administrative mechanisms relating to violation of the law. In addition, the Government stated that there is full consensus on the advisability of repealing the provisions on sanctioning the media for the publication of false news, and the Government has drawn up a proposal which was included in the bill to decriminalize intentional calumny and insult by the communication media.

93. In the context of the nationalization of the media, the Government informed the Special Rapporteur that there are various contradictory opinions: some maintain that foreign journalists should be allowed to exercise their profession in Panama while others hold that the nationality requirement should be maintained.

94. On the proposed amendment to the Administrative Code, the Government informed the Special Rapporteur that the proposal does not interfere with individual or public freedoms because it is a purely administrative regulation of the freedom of assembly. It does not limit, diminish or eliminate the freedom of assembly, as this right is established in the Constitution. It is an attempt to punish those who, under cover of exercising their freedom of assembly, carry or use firearms or bombs, gas or other chemical materials which could cause harm to individuals or property. The bill would also punish those who hide their faces under hoods or masks, prevent public movement through deliberate closure of public access, and destroy properties.

95. In regard to the regulations on the professional ethics of university teaching staff, the Government informed the Special Rapporteur that the regulations were approved by the University General Council, the autonomous and highest body of the co-government of the University of Panama, without being subjected to the executive or any other institutional instruments of the State.

96. In the context of the criminal proceedings against Miguel A. Bernal for calumny and insult, the Government stated that the cause for the complaint was that he had accused the members of the National Police of being responsible for the murder of the inmates who had escaped from the penitentiary where they were being held.

97. The Special Rapporteur thanks the Government for its reply to the specific concerns raised in his allegation letter and for the other relevant documentation that the Government submitted. The Special Rapporteur would strongly recommend a more focused public debate in the country on the regulations referred to above which remain a cause of concern and constitute limits on freedom.

Republic of Korea

98. On 22 July 1998 the Special Rapporteur requested information from the Government about the cases of Ham Yun Shik and Son Chung Mu, charged with criminal defamation and imprisoned for their coverage of the 1997 presidential campaign. Ham Yun Shik, the publisher of One Way Magazine, who printed highly critical articles concerning presidential candidate Kim Dae Jung's background and political ideology, was taken to court by Kim Dae Jung's political party (National Congress for New Politics - NCNP) after his successful bid for the presidency. Mr. Ham was reportedly arrested on 28 February 1998 and is currently serving a jail term after a Seoul court sentenced him to one year in prison on 2 July 1998. Son Chung Mu, the publisher of Inside the World magazine, was arrested on 1 June 1998 allegedly for his magazine's coverage of the 1997 presidential campaign. He is being detained while awaiting his court appearance, which was scheduled for 20 July 1998.

99. On 10 August 1998 the Government of the Republic of Korea informed the Special Rapporteur that Ham Yun Shik's criminal history dated back to 1967 and that he was arrested after having issued and distributed 100,000 copies of his magazine in which he allegedly libelled Kim Dae Jung with reports on his birth, ideology, military service and health condition. As regards Son Chung Mu, the Government recalled that he had been found guilty of "defamation by

printed materials" for which he was sentenced to one year's imprisonment on 17 February 1994. The sentence was suspended for two years. Mr. Son wrote Kim Dae Jung, X File, a book in which he accused Mr. Kim of being a communist, allegedly on the basis of falsified documents. The NCNP lodged a complaint against Mr. Son which was filed for prosecution on 20 February 1998 without physical detention. The two cases are pending in Seoul District Court. The Government also recalled that within the context of the guaranteed rights of freedom of press and publication, Korean legislation provides reasonable limitations in order to ensure fair and just elections. The Public Office and Election Malpractice Prevention Act, enacted in 1994, provides sanctions in article 251 against those with the intention to libel candidates while article 309 of the Korean Criminal Code protects against crimes against reputation committed through printed materials.

100. The Special Rapporteur thanks the Government of Korea for its reply; however, further details would be most welcomed on the fate of the two above-mentioned persons awaiting trial.

Saudi Arabia

101. On 22 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent a joint urgent appeal to the Government of Saudi Arabia with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Concern was expressed about the fate of a Dutch national, Wim den Hertog, and six Filipino citizens, Ariel Ordona, Angelito Sizon, Juanito Manalili, Ruben Aguirre, one unnamed man and Yolai Aguilar, who was said to be nine months pregnant. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, the above-mentioned individuals were arrested for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs. Mr. den Hertog was reportedly detained on 13 June 1998, at his home and had not been heard of since his arrest. The Filipino citizens were said to have been arrested between 5 and 12 June 1998.

102. The Special Rapporteur regrets that no reply has yet been received from the Government of Saudi Arabia on the cases in question and hopes for an early response.

Sierra Leone

103. On 21 January 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent to the Government of Sierra Leone a joint urgent appeal with the Special Rapporteur on torture in regard to Sylvanus Kanyako, David Koroma, and Anthony Swaray, three journalists who were allegedly arrested without charge and detained in Freetown. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, the arrests on 10 January 1998 of Sylvanus Kanyako and David Koroma, both from the *Herald Guardian* newspaper, were related to the publication of an article which anticipated the arrest of a senior member of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. Anthony Swaray, a freelance journalist, was reportedly arrested around 14 January 1998 because of his alleged links with an illegal radio station. While Sylvanus Kanyako was reportedly held at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquarters in Freetown, his arms were said to have been secured tightly behind his back. David Koroma was allegedly ill-treated while in custody and was later admitted to hospital. Anthony Swaray was also allegedly beaten.

104. The Special Rapporteur regrets that at the time of the finalization of the present report, no reply had been received from the Government of Sierra Leone. The Special Rapporteur would like to urge the Government of Sierra Leone to take any steps which might be necessary in order to investigate these cases and to prosecute and impose appropriate sanctions on any persons guilty of torture and violating the freedom of opinion and expression, regardless of any rank, office or position they may hold, as well as to take effective measures to prevent the recurrence of such alleged acts and to compensate the victims or their relatives, in accordance with the relevant international standards.

Sri Lanka

105. On 18 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur transmitted an urgent appeal to the Government of Sri Lanka on the case of Iqbal Athas, a journalist who was allegedly the target of an abduction attempt on 12 February 1998. The Special Rapporteur was informed that Iqbal Athas was being subjected to continued harassment which is believed to be related to his investigations into corruption in the top echelons of the security forces as well as in connection with some of the military actions undertaken in the ongoing conflict between the security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In his communication, the Special Rapporteur welcomed President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's order for the Criminal Investigation Department to conduct an investigation into this incident.

106. On 24 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an urgent appeal to the Government of Sri Lanka concerning Lasantha Wickrematunge, an editor and journalist of an independent weekly openly critical of the Government, who reportedly was the target of an armed attack. According to the information transmitted to the Special Rapporteur, Lasantha Wickrematunge had received anonymous telephone threats and was attacked by an unidentified number of individuals who opened fire from a van outside his house after he and his family had returned home on the night of 17 June 1998. It was also alleged that he had been the target of an assault three years ago and that his house had been watched by persons in unmarked vehicles. The Special Rapporteur welcomed the fact that Mangala Samaraweera, the Minister of Post, Telecommunications, and Media, had condemned that attack and called for a thorough police investigation into the later incident.

107. On 29 April 1998, the Special Rapporteur requested the Government of Sri Lanka to extend an invitation to him to carry out an official visit to the country in the course of 1998.

108. Despite an acknowledgement sent by the Government on 4 May 1998, no further reply has been provided to the Special Rapporteur, in particular with regard to the above-mentioned cases.

Sudan

109. On 28 May 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent a letter to the Government of the Sudan proposing that he visit the country in late summer or early autumn 1998, following an invitation the Government had extended to him in 1996.

110. The Government of the Sudan replied by letter dated 14 September 1998 and suggested that the Special Rapporteur visit the Sudan during September 1998. Unfortunately, previous commitments forced a delay in the visit which is now proposed for May or June 1999, as the Special Rapporteur suggested in his letter dated 6 October 1998 to the Government of the Sudan.

Tunisia

111. On 29 April 1998 the Special Rapporteur sent a letter to the Government reminding it that he had requested, by letter dated 4 December 1997, an invitation to visit the country. He emphasizes that this visit should consolidate the cooperation between Tunisia and the Commission on Human Rights.

Turkey

112. On 10 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent a joint urgent appeal with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to the Government of Turkey on the case of Esber Yagmurdereli, a journalist and lawyer. According to the information received by the Special Rapporteur, Esber Yagmurdereli was arrested on 1 June 1998 after his release in November 1997 on health grounds. In 1991, Mr. Yagmurdereli had supposedly been partially amnestied for a 23-year prison term he had been serving since 1978. With the new arrest and imprisonment, it is alleged that he would have to serve the remaining years of the first sentence in addition to the 10 months for his new conviction.

113. By letter dated 23 June 1998, the Government of Turkey stated that Mr. Yagmurdereli, who was sentenced to life imprisonment, first had been released under a conditional amnesty on 1 August 1991. According to the Government, Mr. Yagmurdereli broke the conditions of his amnesty a month after his release, on 8 September 1991, when he contravened article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, which deals with incitement to violence against the State through propaganda. He was then sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment on 28 May 1997 by the State Security Court and taken to prison on 20 October 1997 after his appeal was rejected by the Court. He was released on 9 November 1997 because of his poor health, which did not represent an amnesty. Mr. Yagmurdereli then rejected the required medical examination at the Forensic Science Institute. The 3d Specialized Board of the Forensic Science Institute, therefore, decided that suspension of the execution of the imprisonment sentence was not required. Consequently, the Chief Prosecutor decided to remove the suspension on the execution of the verdict of Mr. Yagmurdereli, in accordance with article 399/1 of the Turkish Code of Criminal Procedure.

114. By letter dated 18 June 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an allegation to the Government of Turkey on the case of Ragip Duran, a journalist and a founding member of the Turkish Human Rights Association. Ragip Duran started serving his 10-month prison term on 16 June 1998 after being convicted in October 1997 for his article in the now banned newspaper Ozgur Gündem, which analysed interviews he had had with Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK).

115. The Government of Turkey responded by letter dated 2 July 1998, stating that Mr. Duran had been lawfully convicted, in conformity with article 7/12 of the Anti-Terror Law, No. 3713, for having misused his freedom of expression to propagate an illegal terrorist organization and its leader. The Government of Turkey added that Mr. Ragip Duran was not convicted for his interviews with the leader of the PKK, which were published on 12 April 1994, as he was acquitted of that suit filed against him. The Government emphasized that Mr. Duran's conviction was related to his praises of an illegal terrorist organization and its leader, which appeared in the article "Apo 91 Ocalan 94".

116. The Special Rapporteur would like to thank the Government of Turkey for its willingness to cooperate and for the information provided. However, the Special Rapporteur remains concerned about the removal of the suspension of the imprisonment sentence of Esber Yagmurdereli, as well as about his health.

Uzbekistan

117. On 16 September 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an allegation to the Government of Uzbekistan concerning Shadi Mardiev, a reporter for the State-run Samarkand radio station and well-known writer for the journal *Mushtum*, who was arrested on 15 November 1997 and charged for his broadcast on 19 June 1997, in which he satirized the reportedly corrupt practices of Talat Abdulkhalikzada, the Samarkand deputy prosecutor. On 11 June 1998, Mr. Mardiev was reportedly sentenced to 11 years in prison for defamation and extortion. The Special Rapporteur was also informed that Mr. Mardiev had suffered two brain haemorrhages while he was in solitary confinement and awaiting the result of his appeal. On 3 August 1998, the Supreme Court confirmed Mr. Mardiev's 11-year sentence.

118. The Special Rapporteur regrets that at the time of the finalization of the present report, no reply had been received from the Government of Uzbekistan; he expects a response soon.

Viet Nam

119. On 25 May 1998 the Special Rapporteur transmitted an urgent appeal to the Government of Viet Nam in regard to Prof. Doan Viet Hoat, who is detained at Than Cam prison, inter alia for publication of the newsletter Dien Dan Tu Do (Freedom Forum). He was first sentenced in late March 1993 to 20 years of hard labour for his involvement with the newsletter; the sentence was reduced to 15 years on appeal. It was alleged that in addition to his poor health, Prof. Doan's family was denied access to him.

120. The Special Rapporteur regrets not having received any reply from the Government of Viet Nam. He would highly appreciate if the Government could provide him with precise details on the legislation applied in, and the legal basis for, the detention of Prof. Doan Viet Hoat.

Yugoslavia

121. On 15 October 1998, the Special Rapporteur sent an urgent appeal to the Government of Yugoslavia concerning a decree Issued by Serbian authorities on 8 October 1998, which prohibits local media from "retransmitting foreign media

programmes which threaten the interests of our country, incite fear, panic and defeatism or present a negative image of citizens' ability to defend the integrity of Serbia and Yugoslavia". It was alleged that this decree has been used by the authorities to restrict the retransmission of foreign radio programmes by independent media and also to impede the reporting of foreign and Yugoslav correspondents from Kosovo.

122. After the decree was issued, officials from the Yugoslav Telecommunications Ministry reportedly closed down the independent Radio Senta in Vojvodina on 9 October 1998 and Radio Index in Belgrade on 10 October 1998. On 12 October 1998, the independent Belgrade daily *Danas* allegedly received a warning notice and was served a banning order a day later by the Serbian Information Ministry. Another independent Belgrade daily, *Dnevni Telegraf*, also was said to have been closed down by the Information Ministry and the police on 13 October 1998. Both newspapers have reportedly been accused of breaching the above-mentioned decree. A third independent daily, *Nasa Borba*, also allegedly received a warning notice from the Information Ministry on 12 October 1998, for its reporting on Kosovo. In his communication to the Government, the Special Rapporteur expressed his great concern for the independent media and the physical integrity of journalists, who had been reportedly threatened.

123. The Special Rapporteur regrets that at the time of the finalization of the present report, no reply had been received from the Government. He wishes to express his concern over the recent developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He has furthermore been informed that a new Public Information Law has been adopted which reportedly falls short of international standards, in particular with regard to the right to receive or impart information, regardless of frontiers. The Special Rapporteur would be grateful to the Government if he could receive relevant information on this matter.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

124. The Special Rapporteur encourages all States that have not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to do so. Furthermore, he again urges all Governments to scrutinize their domestic legal systems with a view to bringing them into line with international standards governing the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Particularly with regard to the issue of national security, the Special Rapporteur urges all Governments to review not only laws specifically intended to protect national security but also ordinary criminal laws which may be used to infringe the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and information.

125. As regards information, particularly information held by Governments, the Special Rapporteur strongly encourages States to take all necessary steps to ensure the full realization of the right to access to information. The Special Rapporteur proposes to undertake a comparative study of the different approaches taken in the various countries and regions in this regard.

126. As regards the impact of new information technology on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur considers it of pre-eminent importance that they be considered in light of the same

international standards as other means of communication and that no measures be taken which would unduly restrict freedom of expression and information; in case of doubt, the decision should be in favour of free expression and flow of information. With regard to the Internet, the Special Rapporteur wishes to reiterate that on-line expression should be guided by international standards and be guaranteed the same protection as is awarded to other forms of expression.

127. In this context, he also recommends that all reasonable steps be taken to promote access to the Internet. For instance, Governments should promote an economic and regulatory environment which encourages the extension of telecommunication lines to rural and other previously under-serviced areas. Wherever possible, government information should be made available through the Internet.

128. Concerning the link between the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the rights of women, the Special Rapporteur expresses his great concern at the continuing silencing of women by various devices. He urges Governments to take all necessary steps to remove formal and cultural obstacles to the exercise by women of their right to freedom of expression, including to receive information, and, ultimately, to give effect to all their rights. In light of the importance of freedom of expression and how it relates to violence against women, the Special Rapporteur is of the view that a special effort should be made both to gather and to analyse more information along the lines described in the present report. The Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate his wish to be able to prepare a report jointly with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, to be submitted to the Commission on Human Rights next year. In this regard, he invites submissions by Governments, intergovernmental organizations and specialized agencies, as well as non-governmental bodies.

Notes

1/ *Verbitsky v. Argentina*, 20 September 1994, Case No. 11.012, Report No. 22/94, 3 HRR 52; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

2/ *Lingens v. Austria*, 8 July 1986, 8 EHRR 407, para. 42.

ANNEX

How to bring information before the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Overview

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur is concerned with the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information. In view of the complexity and multifaceted nature of this right, the Special Rapporteur views the mandate as not focusing only on individual cases and incidents or being confined only to the issue of freedom of the press or the media. The work of the Special Rapporteur, therefore, involves both action on individual cases and incidents as well as consideration of laws and practices relating to the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to seek, receive and impart information.

Any individual, group, non-governmental organization, intergovernmental agency or Government with reliable knowledge of situations and cases in areas relating to the mandate are encouraged to bring the relevant information to the attention of the Special Rapporteur. The Special Rapporteur invites correspondents to provide information on problems within the scope of his mandate. He is particularly interested in receiving information on problems and violations related to:

(a) Detention of, discrimination against, or threats or use of violence and harassment, including persecution and intimidation, directed at persons seeking to exercise or to promote the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including professionals in the field of information;

(b) Activities of political opposition parties and trade union activists, whether a group or an individual;

(c) Actions against the media (print and broadcast) or impediments to their independent operation;

(d) Actions against publishers and performers in other media, including books, magazines, film and theatre and the studio arts;

(e) Activities of human rights defenders (e.g. lawyers, community activists);

(f) Women's human rights, within the context of obstacles - including laws and practices - which impede the right of women to express their views and be heard, participate in the decision-making process, have equal standing before the law, and seek and receive information on matters of particular relevance to them such as family planning and violence against women;

(g) Obstacles to access to information at the local, regional and national levels on projects and initiatives proposed by the Government to

advance the right to development and obstacles to participation in the decision-making process, as well as obstacles to access to information on other subjects such as environmental and health impact studies, national budgets, social spending, industrial development projects and trade policies.

The Special Rapporteur seeks to balance communications with Governments between those related to individual cases and incidents, which may be considered the symptoms, and those that relate to general patterns of violations - including the legal framework and its application as regards the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to seek and receive information - which may be considered the root causes of violations.

Method

Upon receipt of *prima facie* credible and reliable information, the Special Rapporteur transmits the information to the Government concerned and requests it to provide him with comments and observations. Upon receipt of the replies, the Special Rapporteur establishes whether the information received can be considered as explaining to his satisfaction the circumstances of the case, the applicable laws and regulations and the reasons for the act or omission on the part of the State that provided the initial ground for an allegation of an impermissible infringement on the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

The Special Rapporteur has adopted an urgent action procedure for cases that are of a life-threatening nature or other situations where the particular circumstances of the incident require urgent attention.

APPENDIX

Guidelines for the submission of information to the Special Rapporteur

In order for the Special Rapporteur to be able to take action regarding a communication on a case or incident, the following information, as a minimum, must be received.

1. **Allegation regarding a person or persons:**

   As detailed a description of the alleged violation as possible, including date, location and circumstances of the event;

   Name, age, gender, ethnic background (if relevant), profession;

   Views, affiliations, past or present participation in political, social, ethnic or labour group/activity;

   Information on other specific activities relating to the alleged violation.

2. **Allegation regarding a medium of communication:**

   As detailed a description of the alleged infringement on the right as possible, including date, location and circumstances of the event;

   The nature of the medium affected (e.g. newspapers, independent radio); including circulation and frequency of publication or broadcasting, public performances, etc.;

   Political orientation of the medium (if relevant).

3. **Information regarding the alleged perpetrators:**

   Name, State affiliation (e.g. military, police) and reasons why they are considered responsible;

   For non-State actors, description of how they relate to the State (e.g. cooperation with or support by State security forces);

   If applicable, State encouragement or tolerance of activities of non-State actors, whether groups or individuals, including threats or use of violence and harassment against individuals exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information.

4. **Information related to State actions:**

   If the incident involves restrictions on a medium (e.g. censorship, closure of a news organ, banning of a book, etc.); the identity of the authority involved (individual and/or ministry and/or department), the legal statute invoked, and steps taken to seek domestic remedy;

If the incident involves arrest of an individual or individuals, the identity of the authority involved (individual and/or ministry and/or department), the legal statute invoked, location of detention if known, information on provision of access to legal counsel and family members, steps taken to seek domestic remedy or clarification of person's situation and status;

If applicable, information on whether or not an investigation has taken place and, if so, by what ministry or department of the Government and the status of the investigation at the time of submission of the allegation, including whether or not the investigation has resulted in indictments.

5. **Information on the source of the communications:**

Name and full address;

Telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address (if possible);

Name, address, phone/fax numbers and e-mail address (if applicable) of person or organization submitting the allegation.

Note: In addition to the information requested above, the Special Rapporteur welcomes any additional comments or background notes that are considered relevant to the case or incident.

Follow-up

The Special Rapporteur attaches great importance to being kept informed of the current status of cases and thus very much welcomes updates of previously reported cases and information. This includes both negative and positive developments, including the release of persons detained for exercising their rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to seek, receive and impart information, or the adoption of new laws or policies or changes to existing ones that have a positive impact on the realization of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and information.

Root causes

In order to carry out his work regarding the root causes of violations, which is of particular importance to the Special Rapporteur, he is very much interested in receiving information on and/or texts of draft laws relating to or affecting the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to seek, receive and impart information. The Special Rapporteur is also interested in laws or government policies relating to electronic media, including the Internet, as well as the impact of the availability of new information technologies on the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Communications

Where requested or considered necessary by the Special Rapporteur, information on the source of the allegations will be treated as confidential.

Any information falling within this description of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur should be sent to:

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection
of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for
Human Rights
United Nations Office at Geneva
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Fax: +41 22 917 9003